

assured them.  
 "The brute's all right. No need to be frightened, Mother," he said. "I delivered the blow with just the right amount of power to knock him out without doing him permanent injury. I did it deliberately, not so much because he was rude to Hilda, as to prevent him from making awkward discoveries. It wouldn't have done for him to recognize Craze, for instance."

The big fisherman was making uncanny noises, which seemed to denote joy. "I ain't afeared of him, Master Lance," he growled. "I'd not weep if you'd put out his lights once for all."

ANTONIO DIAZ was now stooping over the prone figure, feeling his pulse and fingering the lump that was rising on the battered forehead.

"It is unfortunate, but it must be treated as a mere interlude," was his verdict. "They will be waiting down below for the completion of the shipment. Shall we let them have it and then discuss the situation?"

The suggestion was carried out. Wilson Polgleaze was left where he lay, and Lance, relieving Nathan Craze at the winch, lowered the last case to the beach. Then they all held a hasty conference, the outcome of which was that when the unconscious man had been deposited on a settee in the hall, Lance and Diaz prepared to go down to the beach to board one of "The Lodestar's" boats.

"I wouldn't leave you with that reptile in the house, Mother, if you were not well protected," said Lance. "And as it is we will stay if you say the word. But you have a stout body-guard in Craze and Pascoe, and I expect he'll slink off directly he comes to. I wonder how he got wind of our doings. He could have had no other reason for coming so far so late."

Diaz had been walking up and down the hall, his swarthy brows knitted in a perplexed frown. "I am not so sure of that," he said. "I don't like it, Lance. I think we ought not to go till he comes to his senses, and we can make him talk. I would rather incur the delay than leave these dear ladies to bear the brunt of any unpleasantness. Remember, we should be away on the high seas to-morrow, beyond recall, if he meant to be nasty. Supposing he did not expect to find us here to-night, for instance, and came for some other purpose? What is your feeling about it, Miss Carlyon?"

"Mine?" laughed Hilda. "I really haven't any, except that you must not think of delay on our account. I am not afraid of Mr. Wilson Polgleaze, or of any purpose that may have brought him here, if that is what you mean, Senor. Probably he was the worse for liquor. He has that reputation, I believe."

"That is true, Tony," came Lance's confirmation. "But I am still of the opinion that he has ferreted out our scheme, and in that case there may be others behind him. Having carried the thing so far it would be a pity to risk being stopped altogether."

Still Diaz hesitated, remembering what he had overheard in the cave. He wondered if Miss Carlyon was aware of the scoundrel's sentiments towards her, and if so, whether she would be so willing to have him left there. But another glance at the proud face of the young mistress of the Tower, and at the strong, resolute features of Mrs. Pengarvan, decided him. In any ordinary circumstances the two ladies were well able to take care of themselves, and Nathan Craze and Timothy Pascoe would be at hand should they be needed.

He could not foresee the very extraordinary circumstances that were to arise and enmesh them in a net from which stout arms and lusty sinews would not avail to extricate them.

"Very well," he yielded reluctantly. "You good people must have it your own way, but I shall never forgive myself if there is trouble."

The matter being settled, Lance issued his commands to Craze and Pascoe. They were to remain within call but out of sight, not showing themselves if Wilson Polgleaze took his de-

parture peaceably. If the young man accepted his chastisement in a proper spirit there was no reason why they should be recognized, and be implicated in any fuss that might follow on the clandestine shipment of contraband. Only if he refused to leave the house, or made himself openly offensive, were the men to come to the protection of the ladies.

"We are not likely to want help," said Hilda, her lip curling as she looked down at the heavily breathing victim of Lance's fist. "He will be only too keen to crawl back to his kennel in Falmouth as soon as he is able to."

Lance had opened the front door, in sailor fashion eager to be off now that his course was clear. Nothing remained but to say good-bye, and Diaz was already bending over the weather-beaten hand of Mrs. Pengarvan. Lance went out under the portico, Hilda following.

"Ha! there's our friend's nag," he exclaimed, pointing to a dejected horse fastened to the hitching-ring. "You needn't worry about the worm, Hilda. There isn't a wriggle in Wilson Polgleaze that can hurt you." He stopped short, and then, resisting the impulse to take the girl in his arms, added quickly: "After this voyage I am going to ask for the right to protect you. I think you know what I mean?"

"Yes, I know; and I shall have my answer ready," was the softly spoken reply.

They looked into each other's eyes, and the question and answer might have been put and returned there and then had not Mrs. Pengarvan and Diaz come out of the hall door and broken the spell. For a minute there was a general chatter of farewell, and then the captain of "The Lodestar" and his companions in adventure vanished into the darkness on their way to the beach and the waiting boat.

The ladies went back into the hall, oppressed by a strange feeling of reaction now that the excitement of the shipment was over. And, though they had made light of it, they could not anticipate Wilson Polgleaze's return to consciousness with anything but disgust. At best an awkward scene was to be expected, and at the worst they might have to invoke the protection of Craze and Pascoe.

The unconscious man still lay, breathing stertorously, on the couch, but Mrs. Pengarvan noticed a faint flicker of the eyelids, and she whispered to Martha and their two male guardians to leave the hall, but to hold themselves in readiness for a sudden summons.

TEN minutes passed, and Wilson Polgleaze stirred uneasily, groaned, and finally sat up, blinking at the two women who stood over him, and then shooting furtive glances round the hall in evident search for his late assailant. At length he rose unsteadily to his feet.

"Am I to be murdered?" he demanded, with a show of extreme terror.

"Nonsense!" was Mrs. Pengarvan's blunt rejoinder. "You have been properly punished for an insufferable intrusion. All you have got to do is to go away and leave us in peace."

"I've got to take care of myself," said Polgleaze, again looking this way and that. "St. Ruanan's Tower seems to be the sort of place where one does have to be cautious. Is your son in the house, Madam?"

"He left some time ago."  
 "Then I'll be going too, and uncommon glad to be allowed to go in peace, as you call it."

The speaker stood, swaying from foot to foot, shifting the gaze of his bloodshot eyes from the door into the dining-room, where the gaunt derrick offered silent testimony of a work well done, to the open front door. The women wondered if he was going into the dining-room to confirm suspicions already dawning when Lance's crushing blow knocked him down, and if so, whether they should summon Craze and Pascoe to prevent him.

But no; he began to move towards the front door, through which his horse was visible, impatiently paw-

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G. J. DESBARATS,

Deputy Minister of the Naval Service, Department of the Naval Service, Ottawa, January 11th, 1916.

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